

PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I spent roughly 40 years working with young people, and over those 40 years there was a growing concern about drug abuse. Drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamines were unheard of in 1960 and became more and more prevalent as those 40 years moved forward.

My observation was the primary drug problem that we had with young people really revolved around alcohol. Last week the National Academy of Science came out with a report on underage drinking that I think underscored this observation. The findings were as follows:

Number one, underage drinking results in \$53 billion of costs to the Nation annually; \$19 billion of this is for alcohol-related traffic accidents; 2,339 15- to 20-year-olds were killed in 2000 by alcohol-related traffic accidents.

Number two, availability apparently is no problem. Ninety percent of twelfth graders say obtaining alcohol is easy. Fifty percent of seniors drink each month, and 25 percent of those drink heavily.

Third, underage drinkers drink more than adults do. The report indicates that underage drinkers consume nearly twice as much alcohol on each occasion than adults. In other words, underage drinkers are more likely to drink to get drunk than adults.

Number four, underage drinking is more addictive. Due to psychological and physiological immaturity, alcohol dependency progresses much more rapidly in young people. Sometimes it progresses in a matter of weeks or months, whereas in most adults the disease may progress over a period of years.

It is estimated that there are 3 million teenage alcoholics in our country today, and those that are addicted to other drugs, it could be a fraction of that 3 million, and yet that gets most of the attention.

Number five, the average age of the first drink is decreasing. At the present time the first age of drink is about 14 on the average. Twenty percent of eighth graders use alcohol frequently.

Six, the side effects of adolescent drinking are devastating. Underage drinking leads to violence, suicide, academic failure, date rape, unwanted pregnancy, it can impede brain development, and it is a gateway to other illegal drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin, because all of those drugs usually do not start with the drug itself but rather alcohol consumption.

Number seven, a point that I would like to bring out is why has underage drinking become such a huge problem. I would say parental factors have been a major issue. Many parents subscribe

to the myth, which is false, that if a young person is using alcohol then they will not use other drugs, when the reverse is absolutely the fact. If you start using alcohol early, you are more apt to be addicted to all kinds of other drugs as well.

Oftentimes parents will purchase alcohol for children. And then, of course, there is the issue of lack of parental involvement. A recent study indicated that parents today spend 40 percent less time with their children than they did a generation ago, and of course that leads to some problems in the alcohol area.

Then of course there has been a problem with media influence. Young people are often targeted by alcohol commercials, and those of you who may watch NCAA football this next Saturday will undoubtedly come across a number of beer commercials, and these commercials will not show you an overweight 50-year-old or an automobile accident or somebody whose wife walked out on him. Rather, they will be young, they will be attractive, they will be athletic and they will be having a good time. And so NCAA sports, which should be aimed at improving things for young people, is, I think, in this case part of the problem. Also, much music targeted to young people glamorizes alcohol.

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So some of the solutions provided by this report I think are worth noting.

I think we need to reallocate government resources. Twenty-five times more money is spent on preventing illegal drug use than preventing illegal drinking by young people, and yet if we can keep people from drinking, particularly at an early age, we are going to do a tremendous amount to cut down use of other hard drugs, and our money would be much better spent in that regard.

We need to hold alcohol advertisers accountable for targeting young people. There is no question that many of their advertisements are aimed directly at people, and some of those are underage drinkers. We need to hold the recording industry, the motion picture industry and the television industry accountable for ratings. Many of these ratings are rated G or PG and have heavy alcohol content in them.

We need to enforce regulations banning the sale of liquor to underage drinkers. Many times people who violate these rules just get a slap on the wrist. It has been proposed, also, by the NAS study that we raise the excise tax on alcohol to promote a campaign to reduce underage drinking, much as we have to reduce smoking.

So all of these things I think are worth considering, and I certainly urge the membership to take a hard look at the NAS report.

LETTERS FROM CONSTITUENTS CONCERNING IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 165 years ago the U.S. House of Representatives passed a rule to ban discussion, debate, printing of any information or discussion of the issue of slavery. As a result, former President John Quincy Adams, who was elected to the House of Representatives after he was President, came to the House floor night after night, week after week, hoping to change the minds of people and debate the issue of slavery.

Adams, one of the Nation's leading abolitionists, one of the Nation's strongest believers in giant social justice, as a result, because he was prohibited from talking about slavery, came to the floor and read letters that he received from constituents in Massachusetts and constituents around the country. He believed that Congress should discuss slavery and debate slavery, so he allowed citizens to speak through him as the microphone, citizens through using these letters to speak directly to Congress, directly to the American people.

In a similar way, many in this Congress are unhappy that we are failing to investigate what our role in Iraq was. My friend from Texas (Mr. PAUL), Republican from Texas, has joined with many of us in questioning and asking for an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program, saying that we need to know more in order to deal with the problems at hand more, and as a result, I would like to read letters from petitioners from Ohio, from my District most of them, from all of Ohio, received from Ohio literally thousands of letters questioning, asking that Congress investigate, questioning what we are actually doing in Iraq.

From Jay from Richfield, Ohio, While listening to the speech of the President regarding Iraq last Sunday, I was struck by the fact he is asking for \$87 billion for Iraqi reconstruction. What is magic about \$87 billion, Jay writes. If we assume there are 290 million men, women and children in the U.S., that means that every man, woman and child will be contributing \$300 to the reconstruction of a country we will never visit and whose welfare would never have affected us but for the lies of our President.

When the President sold America his enormously wasteful tax cut a few years back, his cornerstone was \$300 for every family. He was full of stories regarding what a family could do with an extra \$300. Jay of Richfield, Ohio, writes.

Sue of Elyria, Ohio, writes, Rather than admitting the shortcomings of his failed policy and plotting a course to get us out of Iraq, President Bush used the Sunday speech to the Nation to repeat his lies in the hopes that people will believe them if they are said often